



the **OMEN**

in this issue

interspecies
topics of the day

college drinks

attempts at
amusement

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For the third issue in the 34th Volume of the Omen on February the 5th in the Year of our Lord 2010

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To Submit:

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in rich text or plain text format by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, semaphore or email. Get your submissions to Evan Silberman, Enfield 71A, box 1394, ej07@hampshire.edu.

"I'm not talking to you for the
month of March."
Alex, wounded, to Evan

Front cover by
Tatiana Soutar

Back cover by
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EDITORIAL

Grown-Ups

by Alex Wenchel

In this, The Omen's seventeenth year, I think it is time that we reiterate The Omen's publication policy. The Omen has strived to make it easier for anyone in the Hampshire community to transmit their ideas (and hopefully only their ideas) to anyone who picks up a copy of this bi-weekly publication. The problem, as I see it, is that only a very small portion of the Hampshire community actually uses this incredible tool to broadcast their voice. I have no bone to pick with the thousand or so students at Hampshire that have never gotten off their collective lazy ass to submit even the most bland of content. My bone to pick is with the three other groups on campus that have, to my knowledge, never submitted to The Omen. You see, dear Hampshire community, you are not just a community of students, but a community of staff, administrators, and professors as well.

Why have they not submitted to our fabulous publication? The easiest respond would be to point out that employees of the college can be held responsible for their words through disciplinary action and sadly this is true.

But I see no reason why Professors cannot discuss their recent findings or their interpretation of current events as relevant to their field. Nor can I explain why the staff of Hampshire cannot submit stories from their life or the goings on at Hampshire as they see them. But most importantly, I cannot find a reason why Hampshire's Administration cannot submit to us interesting facts and plans that they might have for the future of this institution.

I implore you, staff, faculty, and administration of Hampshire College, to take the time to submit to The Omen. As a campus we pride ourselves on being as transparent as possible, the time has come for the silent members of our community to speak out and join the dialog. So to the aforementioned members of Hampshire's community, please, feel free to submit anything you like to ej07@hampshire.edu. And to all the students who have made it this far into this editorial, don't give up now for I have but one request! Tell your professors, administrators, and staff that The Omen is for them, insist that it is time that they submit!



Policy

The Omen is a biweekly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous. Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited,

and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish. Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Friday nights in the basement of Merrill on a computer with an extremely inadequate monitor. You should come. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on other Fridays in Saga, the post office, or on the door of your mod.

The Omen Haiku

Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)

SECTION HATE

The Omen is Srs Bzns

by Jordan Persson

Dear Ian McEwen,

Let me get this straight. You took my last Omen article, sprinkled a bunch of extra words onto it, then submitted it as your own?

Really?

I'm not sure what I'm more puzzled about. Why make such an already-cluttered set of paragraphs even more confusing? Why not write your own piece, if you wanted to address something I didn't? Why did you think that a brief (and misspelled) reference to your plagiarism would make it okay?

My original article, I'll admit, was hardly that. The content wasn't anything special, nor was the "pick the word" format. Still, if you want to insult specific people, you should use your own words instead of copying mine. Seriously. You called David Axel Kurtz fat and mentioned him doin' it with a first year. I don't want my article to be twisted to say that. If I'm going to poke fun at Dax-elKurtz, I'm damn well going to do it in my own voice.

In conclusion, don't steal my shit, asshole. 🐼

no u

by Ian McEwan

Dear Jordan Persson,

Okay. We need to clarify this shit.

The primary thing I did to your article was translate it into a regular expression (something you should probably look up on Wikipedia or some shit), because I wanted to make a lame XKCD reference. In the process of transcribing, I decided to add some stuff, because frankly, transcription is boring as all hell. This "stuff" ended up being the various things you mentioned.

So: write a better rebuttal, dude. Not only did I steal your shit, I did it transparently, got bored in the middle of the ten minutes it took to type it in, as a result made fun

of David Axel Kurtz and various others, and did the entire affair for the purpose of a really lame underinformed-Internet-snob joke.

I demand better! Ad hominem is really the way to go here, not an attack on content. Simply calling me a thief and an asshole off to the side in the conclusion doesn't really cover the breadth of my infraction - I'm also short of attention span and overusing Omen tropes. Here's a vaguely-tabulated list of specific tips:

1.) I'd suggest throwing out all that stuff about "using your words, not mine" and "why not write your own piece" and not wanting your article twisted and that shit about the morality of plagiarism and all that; it really just makes you sound like a whiny bitch, and that doesn't vilify me nearly enough. You don't want any readers on my side here. I'm a bad, bad, dude.

2.) Rewrite the little jab you make at my misspelling and instead just go full-out: I didn't even use a spell-checker! I wrote the damn thing in a text editor from the 80s that doesn't even have one!

3.) Stop insulting your own article with things like "already-cluttered set of paragraphs" - the point here is my douchery, not your article.

4.) Basically, throw out everything but the last sentence, and then expand that. A lot.

I hope these tips prove helpful the next time you would like to get your righteousness on.

Because, as you astutely point out, the Omen is SRS BZNS.

Love, Ian McEwen. 🐼

The Thoushallnots of Fantasy

by David Axel Kurtz

It is difficult to reconcile a Manifest approach to literature with an enjoyment of speculative fiction. This is particularly true when dealing with works of fantasy.

Science fiction might at least serve as a predictive utility, a place wherein creativity might be indulged, and, moreover, its ramifications explored. Fantasy is at best rearlooking, and useful as it brings new analysis to the past, or to situations reminiscent thereof, that they might then be applied to the present. At worst, and seemingly at its most ubiquitous, it is designed with special care to be as far removed from the everyday as can be imagined by the mind of man—thus having its purpose to be as useless to a reader with Manifest designs as can be accomplished.

As a reader of fantasies, I have rarely encountered a work which has much application to the world in which I live and the life that I lead. Occasionally do they distract; sometimes do they inspire; rarely do they offer much themselves.

As a writer of a work of fantasy, not the least as one whose sole audience might very well be himself, I have endeavored to produce that which I would like to have such an effect: in inspiration at least, and hopefully beyond, in direct influence upon my interactions with the world.

Towards this end I have established guidelines for myself in the writing of fantasy. As I seek to write that which I hope to find to read, these are also my desires from works of fantasy in general. In the manner of the Commandments, I shall put them in the negative; the positive space left behind can be the light in which Manifest authors can play

1. No Good, no Evil, no order, no chaos, no concrete manifestations of absolutes, nor any villain who is a villain in his own eyes

As we are beyond such things in the modern world, so too are we to go beyond them in our fantasies. Sauron, Voldemort, and every JRPG antagonist: VETO.

2. No prophecy, no destiny, no true prince plotting, nor like moral justification to come from fulfillment of

some stated plot which we are guaranteed is of absolute Right

Since they bring the guiding hand of the author to their story in a way that no guiding hand visits our lives, we cannot rely on them. The Sword that was Broken, the Song of Ice and Fire, and Sybil Trelawney: VETO.

3. No deities, no immortals, no omnipotents, omniscients, nor any other characters with powers which are orders of magnitude in excess of that of mortal man

These are unlikely to accost us in our daily lives, and if they did, would obliterate the entirety of the Manifest philosophy (to say nothing of the Enlightenment). Thus Morgoth, Cthulhu, Randall Flagg, and all their pantheon: VETO.

4. No Deus Ex Machina, nor reliance on miracles, thaumaturgy, or other forms of supernatural Intercession

It cannot be counted on, it cannot be prepared for, and thus there is no purpose in reading for it. The Great Eagles, Dumbledore's Train Station, all such sloppy writing: VETO.

5. No time travel, time manipulation, in any direction; unless they be the beginning of the plot, rather than an aid thereto

By providing characters the opportunity to correct their mistakes, the usefulness of our observing their actions is utterly negated. So time machines, time ships, and above all time-tuners: VETO

6. No clearly defined magical mechanic, nor systematization of the rules of spellcraft and casting

For to introduce such things is to take a great and magical mystery and turn it into a simple computer game; to make of Life nothing more than a set-piece battle. Thus Expelliarmus, and all its sorts: VETO

7. No permanent definition of terms, including the abuse of capitalization, definite articles, genitives, and other absolute explicatives

For to reduce the complexity of the world to a series of proscribed actors and artifacts is to make so simple a story that it has no bearing upon the infinite complexity of the real world. Thus Glamdring the Foe-Hammer, The Sword of the Morning, the Sword of Truth, and every other high-rent Sword of Hitting +3: VETO

8. No use of an Epic Voice, no useless archaicism, nor ever a confusion of stylistic embellishment with substan-

tive accomplishment

For a character must be adjudged Epic in their actions and accomplishments by the readers, not by the haughtiness of the words they use (nor the light which shines behind their heads as they speak). Any other is a veneration, not of substance, but of Symbol, which is of little value. cf. "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie," by Madeleine l'Engle—all other meaningless archaicism and desperate Epic-ness: VETO

9. No purposeless dogmatism, nor establishment of artificially restrictive taboo simply that they may be progressively flouted

It has taken enlightened humanity its entire lifespan to move beyond such simplicities. To take the power and freedom that our progress has earned us, and do nothing but yearn for the days of repression, is to use fantasy, not as new exploration, but as bland escapism, and the worst sort of surrogate activity. Thus Mudbloods, absolute primogeniture, bigotry, et al: VETO

10. No absolute racialism, or speciation dictating the nature of a person's character or abilities

To call all of one race smart, and all of another magical, is as impractical as to cast such judgments upon a given population of humans. Thus strong Ogres, magical Elves, warring Vampies and Werewolves, and all such desperate attempts for the good old days of chauvenism and racism: VETO



Deathfest!
March 6th, 2010!
FPH MLH!
6PM!
Roll And/Or Die!

Ralph Hexter Fucks Us In The Ass Again

by Alex Wenchel

As is the norm at Hampshire, whenever the administration attempts to make a change the rumor mills begin to turn, which causes uproar amongst the students that often is founded on little more than hearsay. The issue of whether to increase the size of the incoming class to 483 is one of these times. Yes, the rumors are supposedly true, Hampshire will be growing yet again this coming fall, and yes, many students will have to live off campus in order to make room for these incoming students. But rather than getting worked up into an uproar about an issue that most of us have spent very little time considering, I think that in this case we should give the administration a chance to explain themselves. I think that this is one of those rare times when as a community; we should demand an all community meeting to discuss the issue at hand. As I understand it, the issue is about money, as is often the case. Which suggests to me that the administration has run out of options to keep the school afloat. That being the case, it is either the responsibility of the student body to suit up and demand full disclosure in a format that is easy to respond to or it is time for us to collectively shut up. Being one of those Hampshire students that don't much like shutting up, I strongly believe the administration needs to give us a time to meet where we can fully comprehend what your plan is. So Ralph, this is directed at you, I expect an all community meeting to be held between 3:30 and 5:00 pm Thursday March 8th in the main lecture hall on the issue of 483 Students and off campus housing. I'll be meeting with you shortly, so I end on a positive note, I'm sure the intent of this new policy is good but please, consult the people you were hired to represent before you make one hundred of us take the bus to school.

METAL WON'T HIT ITSELF



The Hampshire College Blacksmiths Guild

OPEN FORGE

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 to Midnight

WORKSHOP

Wednesdays, 9 to Midnight

ONLY AT LEMELSON

/

SECTION **SPEAK**

A Visit to Harvard

by Rachel Ithen

I've never kept a diary before, though I probably should have. I constantly have an overwhelming urge to record and document my experiences. I guess this goes hand in hand with my pack rat nature, as I hoard ticket stubs, pamphlets, and other small mementos that I figure could be an easy source of nostalgia. There aren't many things to *do* with these tiny keepsakes however, so I find myself either taping them to my door in a sort of messy collage, or piling them up on a table somewhere, allowing myself to easily lose them, which pretty much defeats the purpose of holding onto them in the first place. If anyone knows an easy art project to do with all the crap I have lying around, let me know. Seriously.

Over the first weekend in February I went to the Boston area for the first time in my life (that I can recall, at least) and I figured I would want to document my trip in some way or another. So when I returned to Hampshire and saw a new issue of the Omen in the mail room, I knew exactly how I could document my little visit to Boston. Because what other publication would print your quickly written random rant, your review referencing some obscure video game, or your satirical take on a significant political issue at Hampshire or abroad? Remember kids, the Omen loves you.

So I get to Amherst at 5:30 on a Thursday waiting for my ride. I ended up buying a ticket for this new shuttle service called Road Rabbit Express. Google them; they're pretty neat. For anyone traveling between Noho/Amherst and Boston over weekends, it's a \$20 trip each way and the vans have wifi, places to plug in and charge computers or cell phones, and pretty friendly drivers. The whole journey takes less than two hours as long as there is not too much traffic, so I'd say it was a pretty good deal. So at around 6 o'clock my shuttle comes and I'm in a van with less than six people total, including the driver, most of whom were students as well. (On my way home there

were more like twelve of us, but again, it was pretty much a shuttle full of college students.) Within two hours I'm in Boston.

I was going to the Boston area, specifically Cambridge, to visit my best friend from home at his school: Harvard University. Instead of exuding some stereotypical description of such a scholarly school, I will attempt to discuss it in the least biased way as possible, because it *is* my best friend's school and, to be honest, it wasn't even that bad when I visited.

The dormitory I stayed in is apparently the worst building that freshmen stay in at Harvard. It was also, coincidentally, the most recently built building. I asked around and figured out that the building, Canaday, is about the same age as the entirety of our lovely Hampshire College. The staircases in Canaday are narrow because they were built to be riot-proof in the '70s. Part of Canaday is almost directly next to the Science Center, and it is also immediately behind Annenberg, the main freshman dining hall. Which, I must say, reminds me immensely of the dining hall from Hogwarts. It's one giant room complete with stained-glass windows high in the air and chandeliers lining the ceiling, parallel to the lines of tables on the floor below. The food was not horrible, but my Harvard friend prefers how many options there are here at Saga, or maybe I should say "Roberta's", so besides their grand dining room, I would say it looks like we win the rest of that battle. (Sweet!)

My friend took me on a tour of his campus, and one of the first academic buildings he brought me to was Emerson, the philosophy building. He showed me a few different classrooms, and quite honestly, I was surprised that they didn't differ from classes here all that much. My friend does take a few lecture classes, but several of his other courses contain twenty-five or fewer students and take place in small rooms which contain many chairs situ-

ated around one central table. I got a little nervous seeing this, but eventually I learned that even though many classes at Harvard are just as small as Hampshire classes, most do not really focus so heavily on being discussion-oriented. So bonus points for us again.

When we went to visit the library on campus, they only hesitantly let me in the main door. When I tried to get into the stacks, they pretty much blatantly refused. To get inside, I would have to go back out to the lobby, find another room, and register for a guest pass. We couldn't even find the room we were instructed to trek to, so we left. I never even got to see the infamous Widener Stacks.

Of course I passed the John Harvard Statue, but obviously didn't touch it (and for those who don't know – it's apparently covered in urine. Fun, no?). I felt quite sorry for the group of tourists that were having their picture taken standing next to the statue and holding John's big, bronze hand, completely oblivious to the fact that they were grabbing onto the dried pee of rambunctious Harvard kids.

Once we left the buildings that surrounded Hahvahd Yahd (I had to.) my friend led me off-campus to where most of the upper-classmen live. We went down a few blocks, passed a Starbucks, a Subway, a 7/11, Newbury Comics, and a Ben & Jerry's, and finally approached one large building called Apley Court. I'm sure any expert of the Harvard Campus will know immediately what I am referring to however, because it is easily the most adorned and majestic dorm building at Harvard. The first sight you see when you enter the building is a giant marble staircase with golden handrails that spirals upward into the upper floors. I was later told that many halls in this building contain bathtubs – yes, bathtubs in a college dorm building – and sometimes the bathtubs are shared by as few as two people. Okay, so even though a part of me is creeped out by the thought of sharing a tub with a few recently met strangers and I probably would never even take a bath during my time spent in that dorm, I still think that's pretty neat to have. Harvard, you win this one.

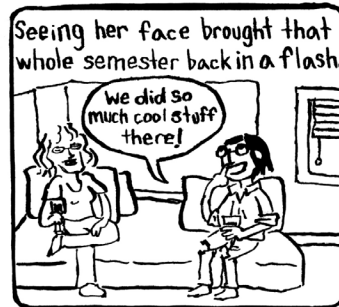
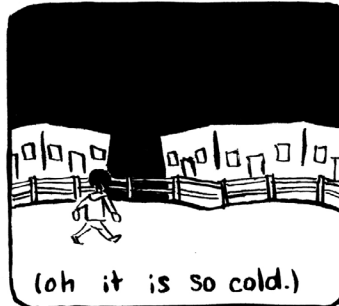
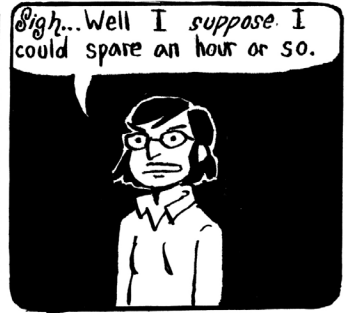
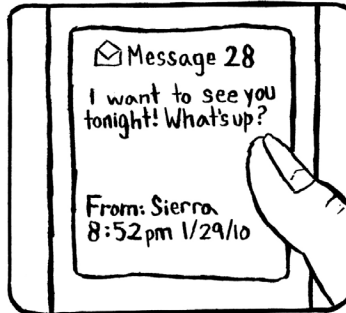
A little tidbit I learned about Harvard was that they had TFs just like our TAs. To them, "TF" stands for "Teaching Fellow." My best friend knows me all too well, and also knows quite a bit about Hampshire, and I noticed that he started smiling when he told me what the letters each stood for. He completely expected my response, which was a light-hearted argument about how "fellow" is a masculine term and represents the patriarchal aspect of society that I assumed Hampshire would want nothing to do with.

The people I met were surprisingly a lot nicer than I expected them to be. I was reluctant to include this part, simply because I didn't want anyone to get the wrong impression. I wasn't expecting all Harvard students to be snobby smart-asses with popped collars or any other generalizing stereotype of Ivy League schools. I wasn't really expecting any of them to be particularly rude, obnoxious, or anything of the sort. But I was still pleasantly surprised with how welcoming they were. My friend shares a common space with four other guys, and over the course of the weekend I celebrated a birthday with them, played bananagrams with them, and ate meals with them in Annenberg and around Cambridge.

This has pretty much turned into a comparative piece between Hampshire and Harvard by now, but I compiled it meaning for it to be more of a simple record of my trip. I ended up really enjoying my stay there (shout out to Canaday C), and many of my former generalizations regarding Harvard students have been easily destroyed. Just like at Hampshire and probably any other school in the country, there are some really great, genuinely intelligent (and I'm not only talking about the "knowing" kind of intelligent in "to know is not enough"), entertaining people there. There are also some assholes, some loud people, the usual partiers, the people who study all night – but again, you can find them almost anywhere. Someone else's experiences may be completely different, but any accusations I have heard about pretention were easily dismissed. So Harvard, you're not so bad.

I still prefer my cozy little Hamp home, though. No hard feelings. 🐻

IT AIN'T EASY BEIN' DIV III



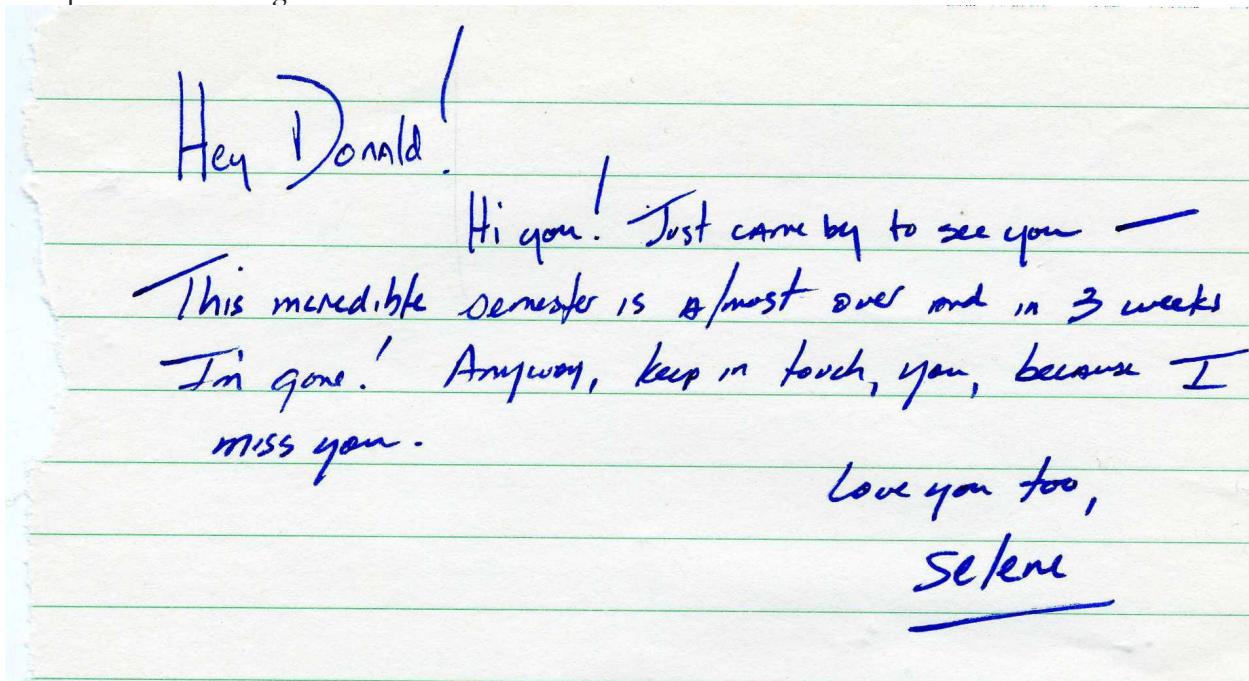
ATHENA CURRIER

action.athena.com

Love and Logic

by Nick Drozd

Recently, while browsing through our library's copy of J. Barkley Rosser's *Logic for Mathematicians* (2nd ed., 1978), I came upon the following note:



This heartfelt missive was tucked away right at the start of Chapter VII, “Equality”. Love in “Equality”, equality in love! A progressive sentiment from which we can surely all learn!

And yet I cannot condone it. Rosser will go on, three chapters later, to observe that “in general, any kind of relation of equivalence or congruence will be reflexive, symmetric, and transitive”. If love is to be a relation of equality, it should be reflexive, symmetric, and transitive. But as any lover knows, love is none of these. This fact is made manifest by the existence of loving self-loathers, unrequited love, and all manner of love triangles.

Love never has anything to do with equality. It is, on the contrary, characterized principally by its ever-ruthless dissymmetry.



Lucky Number 13: Quotulations by Maya Marcus-Sells

“Just thinking about that makes my ass pucker.”

“You drag cigarettes my dear. You hit things which are illegal, like you hit underage women.”

“When I was a kid, one of my house rules was ‘No lighting yourself on fire without adult supervision.’ I remember when I got old enough to light myself on my fire without supervision.”

“The definition of entropy: it’s Lynn Miller playing with the universe.”

“When I was in middle school we weren’t allowed to have penises.”

“I’m watching you.”

“With your nipples?”

“That’s where my third eye is. Both of them.”

“We could make a new line of ghetto-fab snuggies.”

“Vodka...”

“The other white meat.”

“Vague administrative decisions come from Central Housing; bagels come from the House Office.”

“I was a victim of equality and respect.”

“You’re a guy. You can just knock up some whore and give her kids a couch when they go to college.”

“It’s like Superman cumming in you!”

“See?! It happens, you get the ass pucker!”



SECTION **LIES**

The “Invading Poland” Story

by David Axel Kurtz, the most awful man in America

The following is a *work of fiction*.
Any resemblance it has to any orifices,
living or dead, is regretted.

The following story contains graphic descriptions
of *explicit consensual sex between adults*.
Do not read if you are easily offended,
suffer from a heart condition,
or are on my committee.

Also, if you fap to this, you should
probably consider *therapy*.

I.

I have a friend, GoldenBraid, who I’ve known since we were in the third grade. Back then we were just midget nerds. Now he’s a doctoral student in higher mathematics at a big university. Whereas I am still an undergrad, because there is a God, and he hates me.

We talk on Skype from time to time. Through his webcam I can see most of his office. It’s on the eighth floor of this monstrosity of a building. It’s all concrete. Cold War Chic at its finest. The walls are bare sheetrock. The floor looks like a middle school cafeteria. The only redeeming feature of the whole place is this PolishGirl.

She’s also studying higher mathematics. She has a brain. She has a waist. She has long blond hair and a sexy Slavic accent. Total Soviet-bloc hottie. Lipstick and a slide rule. She is, in other words, GoldenBraid’s kryptonite.

She is also engaged to be married. To someone older, richer, and a hell of a lot more suave than GoldenBraid.

GoldenBraid’s office is big enough for fit one person

comfortably. Too bad for him he has to share it with PolishGirl. They’re stuck in there basically on top of each other. Except, alas, not.

They’ve been in this position, or lack thereof, for about a year now. This is absolutely driving GoldenBraid insane. Even from day to day you can see him getting crazier. He is in love. He is in lust. He is in Hell. He has no idea.

All he knows is, he would be willing to sell his dick to the Devil to have sex with this chick. After that, not like he’d need a sex organ anyway.

She hasn’t picked up on this yet. She is the only one who hasn’t. Everyone else in the entire building knows GoldenBraid wants her pants. They keep rubbing his face in it. Taunting him. Torturing the poor guy. As if her constantly being two feet away from him wasn’t bad enough.

He began to get paranoid that she’d overhear them talking about her. Not exactly an irrational fear. “Guys,” he’d say, “you gotta stop talking about PolishGirl like that. She’ll hear you.”

So they invented a code word, to keep things on the DL. No longer do they talk about GoldenBraid jumping her bones.

Instead, they talk about *invading Poland*.

Subtle little fuckers that they are.

But the code has grown in scope over time. Now it means so much more. In fact, it has been decreed, the phrase which describes having sex with a Polish girl, any Polish girl, is *invading Poland*.

Now when I found out about this, I had a problem. Because I already had a definition for that phrase. And like this one, it was also sexual in nature.

We all know about Fall Weiss, the Nazi invasion of

Poland during World War Two. But only some of us probably know about the play, later the movie, *The History Boys*. It tells the story of a group of nerdy British schoolboys who are intensively studying history. It seeps into every facet of their lives.

For example, when one of the characters is talking about fooling around with his girlfriend, he uses strictly martial metaphors to illustrate his points. I can't remember any of them offhand, except for one: *invading Poland*. Which means, of course, buttsex.

And why not? It's something very surprising that German people do. A perfect name.

So now I had two different definitions for invading Poland. One is just having sex with a Polish girl. One is having sex with a non-Pole, and going in through the back door. I explained to GoldenBraid that this wouldn't do. Problems would arise. There would be confusion. Hilarity would not ensue.

He replied, in short, that I should go fuck myself, because my occasional enjoyment of a little anal was nothing compared to his desperate longing for PolishGirl.

"The two are not comparable," I pointed out to him.

"All longing is nothing to my longing," he replied, or melancholy groans to that effect.

Well, call me Avi Halaby, but I think that such agonizing is so fundamentally pathetic that it requires a bit of correction. And GoldenBraid was like my brother. I needed to help him. He needed my help to get back on his feet.

So "Fuck you, nerd-face," I said most fraternally, "I bet you I can have sex with a Polish girl before you do."

"Do it," he said, smiling warmly, "and I will fucking kill you."

Well. We had ourselves a wager.

II.

Are you familiar with the metaphor of the Friends Ladder?

Basically it goes like this. There's a big bucket in the ground with two ladders rising out of it. This bucket, and the ladders, represent a man's relationship with a woman. One is the friendship ladder. The other is the relationship ladder. The bucket is filled with the pit of sexless despair.

Let's say you're this guy. Assuming your goal is to get this woman in the sack (which obviously it is), you want to be at the top of the relationship ladder. At the very top of the ladder there are heavenly clouds, pearly gates, and sweaty secksmaking. At the top of the friends ladder is lifelong platonic friendship and shoe shopping. In the middle, the pit of sexless despair.

Now, you can do things simply, and try to climb the relationship ladder. If you climb well, boom, you have hit the sex. Many good men have tried. Some have succeeded, which is why there are babies born from time to time. Yay circle of life!

But for some this is just too straightforward. It also presents complications, known collectively as 'dating,' or 'earning it.' If you think yourself unlikely to be able to survive to the third date, you can do what many men have tried before, and establish yourself, not as a relationship interest, but as a friend interest. You can climb the friends ladder.

Get to know her platonically. Be nonthreatening. Pretend to listen when she talks. All that good stuff. Climbing that friend ladder all the way.

(Hell is full of Y chromosomes.)

Until one day you are high on the ladder. As high on the friends ladder as the Beast with Two Backs is on the relationship ladder. Then you just have to find some way to jump ladders, and you can go right from friend to fuckbuddy.

The problem is that the ladders, to abuse the metaphor, angle away from each other. Sharply. So that the higher you climb on either ladder, the bigger chance that jumping ladders will land you in the pit of sexless despair. If you're her friend, and you try to become her lover, chances are you're going to get punched in the dick and she'll never talk to you again. If you're her lover, and something goes wrong, sometimes you can still be friends. But most likely she'll punch you in the dick and never talk to you again.

Well.

I had a little problem. The only Polish girl I knew was a very dear, very nonromantic friend of mine. We'd known each other since the first day of classes freshman year. We'd had a tutorial together. We'd been lab buddies. By this point we were juniors, so we'd been friends for

almost three years. We hung out from time to time. We grabbed drinks and took walks. We talked about relationships. We would never have one.

So to put this into the context of the metaphor, I was at the very top of the friends ladder. I was at the right height to jump right to the top of the relationship ladder, i.e. right into her vagina. However, this was also the place where the chasm was widest, maximizing the chances that I'd fuck things up, lose a friend, and, of course, sexless despair.

On the other hand, my girlfriend had just left me, again, for a woman, again. So I really didn't give a fuck. So to speak.

It was a Wednesday night, about five thirty. I was sitting on my bed in my tiny dorm. I picked up the phone, and called up MyPolishGirl.

"Want to grab some dinner?" I said.

She said, sure.

It took her ten minutes to walk over to my room. During that time I hid my dirty laundry, and put on pants.

We went out for dinner. I had a really great time. I told her more jokes than I usually would, I made more eye contact, I didn't talk about other women, only hinted that I was looking for something casual and fun while I was rebounding. The check came. We each paid our portion. We went back to my room, and had sex.

Okay, it wasn't that simple. First we had to watch ten minutes of a movie.

But then we got naked and fornicated.

(Editor's Note: I am Jack's fucking awesome.)

Now I should also say that the girl I'd just broken up with was of a very specific body type. Squared. Cubed. And rounded up. MyPolishGirl, on the other hand, was quite the opposite. She was five foot nothing and weighed one hundred and six pounds in a suit of armor. She had pale skin and ash-blond hair down to the small of her back. She had a chest you could polish and use as a solar mirror. She still got carded to get into R-rated movies.

And she was really nice. She was quiet. She was timid. She was flighty, almost ethereal.

That is, until we got into bed.

She fucking attacked me. She made sure I ripped off

her clothing and then she got me naked in about five seconds. She jumped on me and I went down onto the mattress, arms pinned to my sides. It was like getting mauled by an ocelot. I was pinned.

She kissed me like my lips contained the cure to cancer. She bit me. She declared war on me with her tongue. She was grinding into me, her public bone digging into my leg. She took my hands in hers and fucking drove them into her tiny tits. I was rubbing bone, man, and I couldn't seem to rub hard enough. She completely overpowered me, and I was about three times her size in every dimension.

It was only then that I remembered the occasional friendship that she had with cocaine. I think that explained a lot. Though what I found out later might explain things even better.

So anyway, I wrap up and slide in, and this tiny little Polish chick with the figure of a twelve-year-old just starts conquering me. It's not rape but it's fucking close to pillage. She's on top of me. She's riding me. She's pounding me so hard with her pelvis I'm afraid we're going to spot-weld together. She's screaming and moaning and panting like a triathlete. It's like she's trying to subjugate me. I expect any second she's going to plant a flag on me and claim me in the name of her vag.

And let me tell you I'm basically ripping her in half. It is not like she's needing to do this to get normal amounts of sensation. She is impaling herself to the hilt. I'm surprised I even fit. She's fucking me so hard and she's so fucking tight that the whole thing is just on the edge of being painful.

(But not quite!)

We shift positions a few times, and eventually I end up taking her from behind. Her face is down on the bed, neck bent sideways, and I'm just jackhammering her into the mattress. She's begging for it harder. I'm not really able to do it any harder. I'm only human. As it is I'm fully expecting any minute that she's going to break in half and won't that be hard to explain.

She screams, "Harder!" I get off my knees and put my weight on my feet, that is to say, on my dick. My whole weight is now focused through my dick directly onto her cervix. I am doing my very best to drive her into the bed like a rail spike. I can't see how she's even alive at this



point.

That's when she yells, "Fucking stick it in my ass."

I stop thrusting. Part of me is just confused. Who is this demolition derby she-devil and what has she done with MyPolishGirl? And besides, the physics of it! How does this tiny-ass little girl possibly expect to *fit* me in her ass? Let alone give her the kind of cock-beating that I've been giving her vag? It's just not physiologically possible. She's going to end up in the hospital. She's going to rip off my dick. I'm going to end up in the hospital. Or in jail, for killing her with my fucking wang.

On the other hand – buttsecks.

I pull out and jam it in.

It's about this point where I realize that nothing I do is going to be too much for her. I expect it's just because I was fucking and my testosterone was up, but I'm thinking to myself: this is a challenge. She is challenging me. She's calling me out. She wants it harder? Fine. How hard can I actually fuck this girl? How much is too much? How much is enough?

So on the first thrust I go balls deep into her small hole, and start dry-pounding her as hard as I can.

I should state here that I do not have the longest penis in the world. It's about average, no more, no less. But I have been told, by a number of women, that I have an exceptionally wide penis for my size. Anal sex with me can take months to get fully used to. Whereas with this girl, who has no ass to speak of and is as tight as a preteen, I am slamming into her like a fucking hurricane with a cock.

She seems to be liking it. She's grunting, she's moaning, she's clawing at the bed. It does occur to me that the noises she's making would be the same for extreme pleasure as they would be for soul-breaking agony. But hey, she's an adult. She'll be twentytwo in three years. She can take care of herself. So I continue to destroy her from the ass down.

Finally, after about forty-five minutes, I can't take it anymore. I am one big ball of sweat. There is no feeling left in my dick to speak of. She hasn't come yet, or she's been coming for three quarters of an hour, I don't know which and I don't care. I let it go. I bust about a six-pack of nut. With the amount I let out I am surprised to this day that nothing shot out of her mouth. Or maybe it did, and she's just a swallower.

I pull out and she rolls over onto her back. I'm not surprised. I'd be tired too if I'd just spent almost an hour bent double with something uncomfortably large getting jammed up my down staircase. But then she pulls me down to her! She takes two of my fingers and jams them up her vag, and suddenly, hey!, I'm fingerfucking her. I start licking her clit. I am full-on going down on her rather abused pussy. Oh, and my other hand is being used, by her, to attack her breasts like they are Wiimotes hooked up directly to her G-spot.

This is not gentle stimulation. This is not a postcoital massage. My whole hand is inside of her. I can't even see my wrists. I'm reaching so far up her I could work her like a puppet.

About fifteen minutes of this go by. She gives no sign of cumming, but she doesn't seem displeased with the world. She's grinding her hips down on me and bucking on the bed as hard as a hundred-and-six-pound Polish girl can. I reflect on how interesting it is that there's really only about four inches between one side of her and the other. Her pubic bone is like an exposed girder on a construction project. I want to graffiti my name on it, while I'm down there.

Then her cell phone rings.

She suddenly stops driving herself down onto my fingers and tongue. She looks over, reaches onto the nightstand, and grabs her phone.

She answers the phone.

Now what am I supposed to do with the two fingers that are basically inside her uterus?

I leave them in. It seemed rude to just pull out.

She listens for about a minute, saying little. I just hang out. In her vag. La li la.

Then she hangs up the phone.

She pulls herself off of my fingers. "I have to go," she says.

"Glabuhh?" say I. But she's already off the bed.

She pulls her clothing off the floor, stuffing her bra into her pocket, leaving her panties on my desk. She puts on her shirt, doesn't button it, and throws her scarf into her purse.

"Will I see you again?" I ask.

She takes that as an opportunity to jump on the bed and start attack-kissing me again.

Her phone rings again. "Shit," she says, and runs out of the room, leaving the door open behind her.

III.

Somehow I manage to pull on boxers and take a seat at my desk. I don't know how. My dick is throbbing. I have never cum that hard. Or fucked that hard. It's throbbing inside and out. I am so sweaty I feel dehydrated. I'm dizzy. I'm seeing stars.

Also, *what the fuck just happened to my sex?*

I reach over to my laptop and stop the movie. I close VLC and pop up gMail. I type a little note to Golden-Brain.

Hey boyo.

I just had sex with a Polish girl.

In the ass!

(Among other places.)

So you see, this is just the sort of paradox I was referring to.

Because if having sex with a Polish girl is Invading Poland-

And having particularly raucous buttsecks with a girl is Invading Poland-

This is like... invading Poland... squared.

So what do you call it, then

When you fuck a Polish girl in the ass?

I hit send.

I rule.

I am the ruler.

I am the king of upper and lower fucking Egypt.

Which is not necessarily a sexual euphemism. But in this case, it very well could be.

Then I hear the door to my mod slam shut and heavy footfalls cross the floor. It sounds like a herd of elephants has come into my domicile in search of free beer. These are the noises which can herald the approach of only one person.

Fedora.

He comes over to the doorway of my room. There he is, filling the doorway, over six feet tall with a grin on his face and almost a beard on his chin. I, on the other hand, am almost unconscious in my chair, wearing nothing but boxers, trying to think what kind of analgesic I should

rub into my knob.

Fedora doesn't seem to notice.

"MISTER KURTZ!" he says, gesticulating joyfully with his arms. "How MARVELLOUS it is to see you this afternoon! What are you up to on this GLORIOUS day?"

I stare at him, dumbfounded. "W... w... what the FUCK do you think?" I finally manage to say.

He looked down at me. "I don't know. You're kind of wet. Mister Kurtz, have you... JUST COME OUT OF THE SHOWER?"

Keep in mind I look like I just ran a marathon. Inside someone's asshole.

"No, Fedora. Look around you."

He takes in my whole room, savoring the view.

"MISTER KURTZ! Have you been... HANGING OUT IN YOUR ROOM?"

"No, Fedora. Fedora. Fedora. Look at my room. Look at it."

The bed is destroyed. It's almost beyond repair. Half the covers are on the floor. Some have landed in my closet. There's clothing everywhere. Including pants. And panties. It looks like the Gap catalog had an abortion on my floor.

"MISTER KURTZ! Your room is covered in dirty clothing and linens! Have you by any chance been... DOING YOUR LAUNDRY?"

Oh, Jesus.

"No. No. Look, Fedora... look around you, god-damit."

There are candles lit all over the room. There's essential oils in a volatilizer. The lights are off. The curtains are drawn. Oh, right, and I'm still IN MY UNDERWEAR, COVERED IN SEX.

"Well well... MISTER KURTZ... have you by any chance been... LISTENING TO MUSIC?"

"FEDORA!" I say. "Inhale through your nose. Inhale, through, your nose. What does it smell like I've been doing? Huh? What's it smell like? What's it smell like?"

He takes a long deep drag of my room's musky sex-bombed air. He savors it, rolls it about on his tongue.

"MISTER KURTZ... there is a certain musky quality in your room. It smells almost like roasted meat. Rather like... lamb. Mister Kurtz, have you been... ROASTING LAMB?"

"Fedora!" I say. "MOTHER. FUCKER. Your parents are FARMERS. Does it smell like anything you usually smell on the FARM?"

He inhales again, deeply. He smacks his lips.

"Well, to tell you the truth, it does remind me a little of breeding season back at the old farmhouse. At that time of year my parents would breed minks in the backyard. Wait. MISTER KURTZ. Have you been... BREEDING MINKS IN YOUR ROOM?"

Oh good God.

"FEDORA. FEDORA. FEDORA. MY BED IS DESTROYED. MY ROOM IS FULL OF WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR. THE SHADES ARE DRAWN. IT SMELLS LIKE ANIMALS HAVE BEEN MATING! WHAT THE FUCK HAVE I BEEN DOING, FEDORA? WHAT HAVE I BEEN DOING?"

Pause.

Pause.

He stares at me.

Suddenly his hands fly to protect his nose and he recoils back two feet in horror.

"OH NO! MISTER KURTZ, NO! NO!!! NO, MISTER KURTZ, I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE TRICKED ME INTO SMELLING YOUR *BUSINESS!* MISTER KURTZ, FOR SHAME, I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT I HAVE BEEN SMELLING YOUR *BUSINESS!* OH NO, MISTER KURTZ, OH NO!!!"

With that he turns from my doorway and literally runs out of my mod.

I consider taking a shower, but first, I have one new message.

From: GoldenBraid

I hate you with every fiber of my being, and I will come to kill you as soon as I can afford bus fare.

Oh, and word you're looking for is "Blitzkrieg."

IV.

I didn't hear from MyPolishGirl the next day. Or the next day. Or the next. I was kind of upset about the second 'next' there, because it was my birthday, and we had made plans to hang out. But then again, that was before

the blitzkrieg. So I suppose things were likely to have changed.

By the third day I was worried. Also I was feeling a little stalkish. So I called up a mutual acquaintance of ours, FilthyHipsterWhore.

She obviously didn't know that we had hooked up. Nobody did, I think. But she said I was right to worry about MyPolishGirl. It seems that she was in kind of a bad way.

It turns out that she had taken an emergency medical leave of absence, with something like a week left of the semester. She had dropped out of school and was taking a full roster of incompletes.

At first I thought I had done it. What was it, impacted bowel, accidental hysterectomy? But no, FilthyHipsterWhore informed me, it wasn't physical. It was psychological.

Within 24 hours of us hooking up, MyPolishGirl had a full nervous breakdown.

She had to be hospitalized.

She entered a mental institution.

And while committed... SHE HAD ELECTRO-SHOCK THERAPY.

Maybe it was the fact that she had allowed herself to become intimate with a good friend. Maybe the sexual insanity I witnessed was just the first signs of a deeper instability coming to the surface. Maybe it had nothing to do with me, or my penis, and it was just coincidence. But the long and short of it was, I had fucked this girl, and immediately afterwards, she went mad.

"Don't worry," an ex of mine said, later. "Your dick isn't all that special." I think she said this to comfort me. I hope she's right.

It was three days later that I finally saw Fedora again. I was sitting on a picnic table in front of my mod, drinking a post-driving-a-girl-insane brandy and reading some Neal Stephenson monstrosity. Fedora sauntered over, staring at me askance, his fedora resting judgmentally upon his brow.

"OH, MISTER KURTZ, I still cannot believe that you made me smell your *BUSINESS!* For SHAME, Mister Kurtz, for SHAME."

Oh, relax, Fedora. It's nothing you haven't smelled be-

fore.

“But MISTER KURTZ, it is nothing if not ungentlemanly for one man to allow another to inhale of his JISM!”

His what? I mean, my what?

“Play not the simpleton with me, Mister Kurtz! I know it was your dreaded plan that all the while I would have to smell your JISM!”

Wait. Wait. You think I had just been *playing with myself* when you walked in on me?

“But of course, Mister Kurtz! How else would you have succeeded in bring to fruition your dastardly plot to make me smell your JISM?”

Oh. My. Christ.

“NO, Fedora,” I shouted, “I WASN’T PLAYING WITH MYSELF. THE ROOM WAS DESTROYED. THERE WERE PANTIES ON MY DESK AND CANDLES BURNING LOW ON THE BOOKSHELF! IT LOOKED LIKE A PORN STUDIO! IT SMELLED LIKE MINK CUNT! YOU THINK I HAVE TO SET THE MOOD WITH CANDLES BEFORE I JACK OFF?”

“Spare me your LIES, Mister Kurtz! Spare me your LIES! I heard you admit, from your own lips, that-”

“Fedora. I HAD BEEN *FUCKING*.”

Pause.

“A woman?”

“YES A WOMAN!”

Pause.

Pause.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh,” Fedora said. “Yeah, I can see that.”

Fedora and I continued to be friends thereafter, even if I had given him three sleepless nights as he fought with the image of being attacked by jism-demons.

FilthyHipsterWhore tried to come on to me a few times, but there’s something about that level of skanky that I can’t really abide. Sexually I am not that impure. I may not be the driven snow but I’m not the East River either.

GoldenBraid is still in that office, and still hasn’t invaded Poland. In either sense of the word. In fact, he just got back from a mathematician’s conference in Poland. During which time nothing of more substance was invaded than my inbox, filled as it was with bad Polish jokes and melancholy references to the Blitzkrieg that he would never have.

His PolishGirl is still engaged to be married. It is rumored that her husband and she are waiting until marriage to consummate their love. It is quite possible that she is still a virgin intactae. Whether this calls for Breaking the Warsaw Pact jokes, or references to the Red Storm Rising, we haven’t quite decided.

I saw MyPolishGirl once the following semester. She was sitting outside a Prescott mod, smoking a cigarette with a shaking hand, and she wouldn’t meet my eyes. I suppose there’s something about getting fucked institutionalized by a guy that makes it a little awkward afterwards.

Apparently some people just can’t hold their Blitzkrieg.

-Kennebunk, 2010



Marjorie Sprankle Has a Cankle

A (failed) (NaNoWriMo 2009) novel

by Daniel Clarendon and Alyssa Pilkons

Chapter 1: An Xpress Redi-Set-Go Tragedy

There once lived a middle-aged woman named Marjorie Sprankle. She was a simple woman, and she spent many of her days merely sitting on her rocking chair in front of her television, watching infomercials. Her favorite of these infomercials was the one for the Xpress Redi-Set-Go oven. In this infomercial dozens of meals are made in mere minutes! This impressed Marjorie Sprankle greatly. As much as the speediness of the cooker impressed her, she was even more impressed by the good looks of Miss Cathy Mitchell and Mr...wait...what was his name again?

Anyways, Marjorie Sprankle ordered not one, not two, not three, not four, but five whole Xpress Redi-Set-Go ovens for her kitchen. She lined them all up one-by-one on her counter top and began prepping her eggs for her eggsters, her cheese for her cookizas, and her cinnamon for her cinni-minis. She rushed around frantically mixing and beating and adding ingredients to the Xpress Redi-Set-Go ovens and began jumping for joy, full of excitement when the little red lights, included with purchase, began flashing and the dingers dinging signaling the her eggsters were done.

That, however, is when the real tragedy begins and when our story truly starts. Marjorie Sprankle, in her haste, ran towards the farthestmost Xpress Redi-Set-Go oven and tripped over a dollop of butterscotch pudding that had dripped onto the floor. Luckily for her, she did not trip so much as to fall flat on the floor on her face. Instead, she merely tripped enough to feel slightly embarrassed, and looked all around her to assure herself that nobody had seen her disgraceful action (even though this was quite unnecessary as Marjorie Sprankle was at home and lived alone). Marjorie Sprankle also noticed a slight pain in her left ankle. She lowered herself down onto one of her dining room chairs to have a look.

Marjorie Sprankle lifted up her pant leg and lowered down her sock. Then she gasped. She looked away. She

looked back. It was unmistakable.

Marjorie Sprankle had a cankle.

Her lower left leg was completely straight all the way down to her foot. There was no ankle in sight. She lowered the sock on her right foot to compare, but her right leg was completely cankle-less. Not a cankle in sight. Her eyes drifted back to her left side. Maybe, she thought, the cankle will have disappeared. But the cankle was still there and prominent as ever.

Marjorie Sprankle sank her head into her arms and began to sob as the rest of her Xpress Redi-Set-Go ovens flashed their red lights and dinged their dingers. Her eggsters burned and burned.

Chapter 2: Marjorie Sprankle Deals with Her Cankle

Marjorie Sprankle was in the depths of despair. This was because Marjorie Sprankle was a thin woman. She was not the type of woman who had to deal with the issues of the obese. Sure, she liked to buy trendy ovens from infomercials, line them up, and cook feasts for herself every once and a while, but these feasts did not by any means extend to her thighs. No, Marjorie Sprankle was not the type to have a cankle.

But the more Marjorie Sprankle cried into her cankle, the more she realized that she would just have to toughen up and deal with this cankle. It was undeniable she had a cankle, so now the only thing she could do was learn to live with her cankle.

As Marjorie Sprankle began nibbling on her now crispy eggsters, she thought about how people with cankles lived. She thought about how they walked. She thought about how they acted. She thought about how they interacted with other people, people with cankles as well and people without cankles.

She decided to go to a bakery.

Because it was November, there were no visible legs in the bakery. Everybody was wearing pants. There were

many pairs of blue jeans, some sweatpants, a few corduroys, and even a pair of khakis, but not a single pair of capris or a mini-skirt. Then again, Marjorie Sprankle assumed that most owners of cankles would not dare show their cankles.

Marjorie Sprankle bought a glazed doughnut with rainbow sprinkles. Then she sat on a stool and began observing the owners of the cankles. They walked. They talked. They interacted and they ate pastries and drank coffee. As far as Marjorie Sprankle could tell, people with cankles were just like everybody else.

Marjorie Sprankle was overjoyed by this discovery. Maybe, she thought, having a cankle wouldn't be so bad. To celebrate this good news she bought a chocolate éclair and then headed home.

Chapter 3: Marjorie Sprankle Meets Eleanor Finkle

There was nothing Eleanor Finkle hated more than lobster bisque. Oh, the sight of it! Oh, the smell of it! Yet, every Friday night her husband insisted on bringing the dreadful stuff home for dinner.

"Robert, if I've told you not once, not twice, but over three hundred times that I can't stand lobster bisque! If you insist on eating that horrendous soup in my house than I surely will march out of here this instant!"

Robert, whose mouth happened to be full of creamy lobster bits and oyster crackers at that moment, could only utter, "Whamhhmph?"

"Robert!" Eleanor cried, "I've told you not once, not twice, but two hundred times that I do not understand it when you insist on speaking in gibberish! I surely need some air!" And with that Eleanor was out the door.

Marjorie Sprankle, her belly full of pastry, was finding it difficult to walk on her cankle as she made her way home. Because of the discomfort her cankle was causing her, Marjorie Sprankle found herself making unpleasant faces, as though grouchy, or constipated.

Eleanor Finkle was not in a good mood. Her nose was full of remnants of the lobster bisque stench and her eyes were full of rage. Even worse was that in the distance she saw a strange limping woman looking at her in the most ugly way. Eleanor Finkle knew she was being given the stink eye.

Chapter 4: Nemeses

Mortimer Pinkle was not a fan of violence. Never had been, never would be. In elementary school, when bullies pushed him down in the mud, he would simply say, "Gentlemen, can't we be reasonable?" In middle school, when girls pulled out chairs from under him, he would simply say, "Ladies, have I done something to offend you?" In high school, when teachers threw erasers at his head, he would simply say, "Forgive me, sir (or madam.) I know not the errors of my ways." In college, when elementary-school students slapped his rotund face, he would simply say, "Quite right. I deserved that."

Yes, Mortimer Pinkle found violence completely distasteful. That's why when he saw Ms. Spankle and Mrs. Finkle staring each other down like two cowboys outside of the O.K. Corral, he went inside his house and locked his door to rake his rock garden and utter his daily pacifist mantras. But a voice disrupted his inner serenity. A shrill voice, cutting above even the dulcet tones of the dulcimer music his tape player was dutifully playing.

"You bitch!" It was Eleanor Finkle. No one gives the stink eye to Eleanor Finkle. Not even Mr. Finkle. *Especially* not Mr. Finkle. Mr. Finkle had tried one morning when he suspected his wife of hiding his favorite slippers. The punishment Mr. Finkle received for this grave accusation was swift and severe.

If there was one thing Marjorie Spankle hated—more than crispy eggsters, that it—it was profanity. She found it utterly despicable and she wanted to scrub the mouth of anyone who uttered such an offense with bleach. She almost did on a fateful afternoon when the little boy she gave piano lessons to told her to go to hell.

"How dare you call me by that heathen name?" she spat. That's when she charged, shrieking like a banshee as she ran.

Not to be outdone, Eleanor Finkle started booking it toward her adversary. But she knew not of Ms. Sprankle's hidden weapon. A swollen calf-ankle combination. Eleanor Finkle did not even know what a cankle was until it roundhouse-kicked her in her face, sending her dentures flying. (What? She wears dentures? You betcha.)

Chapter 5: Total BFF's

"Ow!" Eleanor exclaimed, rubbing her jaw as she arose from the pavement. "That really, really hurt! That could not have been any normal ankle."

"Indeed it is not," Marjorie replied. "I sprained my ankle today as I incredibly made five different food items at once. So now, I have this." She lifted the leg of her pantsuit to reveal the gargantuan cankle.

"My word," Eleanor gasped. "That is extraordinary."

"You think so? Really? You're cool. Let's go eat éclairs." (Marjorie was not one to pass up any opportunity to eat éclairs, even if she was already stuffed to the gills with pastry already.)

"Okay," Eleanor said. "But first, help me find my dentures."

From a nearby window, Mortimer Pinkle watched as the women found a pair of dentures in a nearby gutter and went off down the street, arm in arm, chatting animatedly. He was relieved (if a little confused) to see the peaceful resolution of such a vicious (if brief) catfight.

Little did he know that that would be the last fight he'd ever have the misfortunate of watching. For in twenty-four hours time, he would be dead at Marjorie Sprinkle's hand.

Chapter 6: Of Bavarians and Beehives

Eleanor Finkle, by some odd twist of fate, had never enjoyed an éclair before. She had no idea why. She had sampled almost every other baked good the world had to offer, but the éclair always eluded her. No matter where she went, the last éclair had always just been bought. It troubled her, but no more so than a hangnail did.

But here she was, sitting with a woman who had not twenty minutes ago kicked her in the face with an enlarged ankle, about to eat her first éclair. She was thrilled. That's why she bit into her first one a little too eagerly, sending a glob of cream filling sailing over her new friend's head and right into the beehive hairdo of one Petunia Dinkle.

Petunia Dinkle was normally a forgiving person. She forgave her cat Mittens when Mittens killed her gerbil Maximilian. She forgave her milkman Louis when Louis spilled skim milk all over her daffodils. She forgave her

garbage collector Frank when Frank collected her beloved lawn gnome collection with the rest of the trash. She even forgave her hairdresser Stefan when Stefan gave her a beehive hairdo. But cream filling in one's hair is no laughing matter. Sure, one could wash it out, but not completely. Not ever.

That's why Petunia Dinkle ran sobbing from the restaurant and straight to the nearest shower she could access, which happened to be in the house of her stepbrother, Mortimer Pinkle. (Mortimer, for his part, almost didn't hear the doorbell, so busy was he playing the hits of the Beatles on his trusty xylophone.)

Back at the restaurant, the two women were laughing their asses off. (Marjorie decided not to mention the fact that her new friend had more of an ass to laugh off than she did.)

"Did you see the way she ran out of here?" Eleanor squealed, her mouth full of chocolaty, creamy, doughy goodness.

"I did! I did!" laughed Marjorie. "That was too funny!"

"I really nailed her with it, didn't I?"

"Direct hit!"

For her part, Petunia Dinkle was decidedly not laughing, too preoccupied as she was with scrubbing the Bavarian cream out of her hair. Perhaps in time, she would find this funny. But probably not. For Petunia Dinkle, it was said, never had much of a sense of humor. In fact, she was banned from local comedy clubs for "bringing the whole place down."

No, Petunia Dinkle didn't laugh. But she did plot revenge.

Chapter 7: An Uncontrollable Mane

Mortimer Pinkle stood outside the bathroom door uncomfortably. He didn't get along all that well with his stepsister Petunia Dinkle. In fact, Petunia tended to make him quite *uncomfortable*.

Mortimer Pinkle, the soft-spoken and calm person that he was, did not enjoy being *uncomfortable*, yet every time his stepsister stopped by for a visit he found himself unable to escape the *discomfort*. There was the time she put his pet parakeet in the blender thinking it was a chicken. And the time when she stole all his under-

pants and donated them to charity. And also the time she baked three hundred strawberry cupcakes in his kitchen and glued them to his bathroom ceiling. (He never could quite figure out why she did that.) Mortimer Pinkle tried his hardest to remain zen, but with Petunia Dinkle around he found it very difficult.

There was a scream from inside the bathroom. Mortimer Pinkle knocked nervously on the door. “Petunia?” he said. “Petunia, what’s wrong?”

The bathroom door flung open knocking Mr. Pinkle to the floor. He cried out in fear. Whatever had barged out of the bathroom was not comfortable. And was definitely not in tune with its inner zen. As Mortimer Pinkle remained curled up on the ground in fetal position, trying desperately to reach his happy place, a strange and terrible creature crept closer and closer to him. Long, thick, busy hair covered the creature’s head like a mane. The creature’s eyes were full of thoughts of evil—thoughts of death. Mortimer Pinkle shrank further, into the corner of the hallway.

“Mortimer Pinkle, you old lug, get up right this instant! I need your assistance immediately!”

This was worse than the taunting by elementary school children. Petunia Dinkle was in his house and somebody had messed up her hair.

Petunia Dinkle dragged Mortimer Pinkle down the stairs and plopped him on a chair in the kitchen.

“Mortimer! Today I was completely disgraced! More disgraced than I ever have been in my entire life! And I was no disgraced by just anybody. No. Today I was disgraced by two elderly women!”

Mortimer Pinkle gasped. Not because he felt particularly sympathetic towards his crazed stepsister, but because he felt she expected him to gasp at that moment and he did not want to experience the anger Petunia Dinkle tends to express when she does not receive the gasps she expects.

“I know, right?” Petunia Dinkle exclaimed. “I was at the bakery, picking up a cupcake for Maybeline’s birthday (Maybeline was Petunia Dinkle’s cow, whom she loved dearly). Then out of nowhere, a glob of cream comes flying threw the air and lands right in the middle of my beehive. Completely in shock, I look around the place for the culprit, and I see this ugly old woman with a huge ass just full out guffawing at me. Mortimer, I am so furious

right now that I could, I could just, I could kick Jesus right in the head!”

Mortimer Pinkle gasped. This time his gasp was of pure shock. “Kick...Jesus?”

Petunia Dinkle glared at her obviously hopeless stepbrother. “Mortimer,” she said, “I have a very important task for you to complete. Are you able to handle this?”

Mortimer Pinkle stared nervously up at his stepsister. At her bushy, uncontrollable hair mane. At her vengeful eyes. He wanted, at that moment, to do anything but Petunia’s task. However, he knew Petunia was family. More importantly, he feared torture if he did not comply.

And so “I’ll do it,” Mortimer squeaked. Those were the last words Mortimer Pinkle would ever utter.

Chapter 8: An Invitation

Eleanor Finkle was having the time of her life. Never before had she found so much amusement in the flying of creamy substances into large hairdos. Never before had she temporarily lost her dentures and laughed her ass off in the same day (nor had she thought herself capable of doing so!). So, as it began to get darker outside and as the bakery worker began to hint at the women at they should leave because he was trying to close up, a thought occurred to Eleanor Finkle. It began as a little thought, but it became more and more exciting as it brewed in the back of her head.

“By Golly!” she finally said in between bites of her seventeenth éclair, “Marjorie Sprankle, I would most certainly like you to come to my house for a sleepover party!”

Marjorie Sprankle looked back at her new friend. Her eyes were wide. Her heart was thumping. You see, Marjorie Sprankle had never in her life been invited to a sleepover party. This was mostly due to the fact that in all seven years of middle school and high school she was forced to wear an unfortunate orthodontic appliance that went all the way around her head like some kind of torture device. It was not until after college that her parents told her that she had in fact never had any dental imperfections. Her father simply wanted to ensure she would not have any sexual intercourse until she graduated. Because of this Marjorie Sprankle had some deep-rooted hatred of her parents. However, at this moment Marjorie Sprankle’s thoughts were not full of deep-rooted hatred. Right now

Marjorie Sprankle was full of utter and complete glee. She was about to embark on her very first sleepover party, and by golly, she was psyched!

Chapter 9: Denture Cleaning and Storage Procedures

Marjorie Sprankle agreed to gather her overnight bag at home and arrive at the Finkle house soon after. Eleanor Finkle rushed home herself. Her husband, Robert Finkle was sitting at the kitchen table. Robert Finkle, being an elderly man and all, was still sitting at the kitchen table slurping his lobster bisque.

"Hi honey," Robert Finkle said pleasantly.

"AAAAA...RRRRR...GGGGG...HHHHH!" Eleanor Finkle screamed, diving at the table and throwing the bowl of lobster bisque on the floor. "Clean it up, and get out!"

"What?"

"I'm having a sleepover party tonight! Get out!"

And that is how Robert Finkle found himself staying over at the house of Walter McLarkle, his old golfing buddy, for the night.

Meanwhile, Marjorie Sprankle arrived at Eleanor Finkle's house with her tote bag of supplies.

"What did you bring?" asked Eleanor Finkle, excitedly.

"Well," Marjorie said, "I brought Yahtzee."

"I love Yahtzee!"

"Me too!"

The two friends giggled and hugged happily. Marjorie reached back into her back. "Oh, and I brought my denture cream."

"Well," Eleanor Finkle said, "Let me just show you now where we keep the denture storage containers in this house."

Chapter 10: Doggone Dreams

Walter McLarkle was a dumb man. Not just ditzy, not just dim, not just dull. No. Dumb. But was he ever devoted to his basset hound, Marcie. Marcie was the love of his life, or the closest any living being had gotten to being the love of his life. It wasn't that Walter McLarkle was unlucky with the ladies—well, no, that's exactly what it

was. He was hopeless. Hopeless and dumb. But devoted to Marcie.

For her part, Marcie the basset hound was unimpressed with Walter's affection. She saw him for what he was: pathetic. Pathetic and hopeless. Pathetic and hopeless and dumb. But she had to admit that he had a certain *je ne sais quoi* about him—a certain oafish charm. And she could see how happy she made him every time she fetched the newspaper or ran after a Frisbee or chased that damn tail of hers. So that's why she stayed.

But when she laid eyes on his friend for the first time, she was entirely smitten. She wondered, *Who was this beguiling stranger? So tall. So elderly. So scented of lobster.*

"Robert, Marcie. Marcie, Robert," said Walter in his slow drawl.

"You're introducing me... to your dog?" Robert said, uncertainly.

Oh, that's how you want to play it, Marcie thought. So cool. So nonchalant. So blasé. It only made him more appealing in her eyes.

"Of course I am," Walter responded. "She's my special girl.

Shut up, fool! You're nothing more than a charity case. I'm no one's special girl—except for maybe this Robert fellow. Robert. Robert. She let his name reverberate in her canine mind.

She wanted to let him know how she felt, so she forwardly licked his feet. She hated the taste of leather, but for him, she made an exception.

"Stop it, mutt."

Such cutting words. But how your voice makes my tail wag.

Yes, Marcie decided. Robert would make a fine owner. (Especially if his home had lobster.) Marcie would make that happen before the night was out.

Chapter 11: Petunia Prevents Peace

Yes, Mortimer was prone to sporadic mutism. He never knew why it happened, or when it would, but he never minded. Not being able to speak had its benefits: it was certainly a more peaceful way of living. If he knew that he would be killed in a few chapters time, perhaps he would have tried harder to speak. But ignorance is bliss, and he was blissful.

At least, he would have been if his stepsister was not blabbering on. He could hardly hear the Kenny G cassette tape he had purchased that day.

“What would be the most humiliating thing we could do? Should we tar and feather her? Tie her by her ankles to the church steeple? Take pictures of her in the shower and publish them on Craigslist? Put a raunchy dating ad for her in the classifieds? Follow her around with a whoopee cushion?”

Mortimer stayed silent, not by choice. Though if he had a choice, he’d likely stay just as quiet. A vengeful stepsister is not to be reasoned with. Petunia narrowed her eyes at him.

“Why so quiet?” she demanded. “Are you getting cold feet? You coward. I always knew you’d never go through with it. But I didn’t expect you to disappoint me this early on. What a baby you are. Always chanting your ridiculous whatevers and making little patterns in pebbles. So unconcerned with real-life problems. Mortimer, there are people out there who squirt éclair cream. Do you know that? *Éclair cream*, Mortimer. And into hairdos. That’s a hair-don’t. Even if my hairdo is unfortunately dated. Even if my name is unfortunately dated! It doesn’t matter! Irregardless!”

Mortimer felt the urge to tell her that *irregardless* is not a word, but he resisted the urge. Not that he could correct her anyway.

“I’ll just have to handle this myself!” she squawked, storming out of the room. “And by the way,” she shrieked on the way out, “Kenny G music sounds like whales farting in space!”

Mortimer knew this not to be true, but it didn’t matter. She had left and taken her decibels with her. He was alone and at peace—blissfully unaware that his hours were numbered.

Chapter 12: Where the Wild Dentures Are

Marjorie could not believe her eyes. When her new friend Eleanor Finkle had said to her, “Let me just show you now where we keep the denture storage containers in this house,” Marjorie pictured a medicine cabinet, or perhaps a bureau drawer. But not this. Never this.

Inside a room at the top of the staircase was vegetable upon vegetable, each hung on the wall like the stuffed

heads of a hunter’s spoils. Each vegetable had eyes drawn on with marker and mouths carved out. And in each mouth of each vegetable was another pair of dentures. All these vegetables—squashes, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, broccoli—each carefully preserved, each with cartoon eyes and ghoulish denture smiles.

Marjorie recoiled in horror. But one thing terrified her most of all: what was a tomato doing in a room of vegetables?

“Do you like it?” Eleanor asked, beaming.

“It’s... stupendous,” Marjorie lied. How would she ever sleep in such a frightening house? What kind of person anthropomorphizes vegetables? Sure, Marjorie had had her fun in her youth, laughing at carrots that came in lewd shapes, and sure, she might have decorated the occasional celery stalk, but this—this was freakish.

Marjorie Spankle knew that something had to be done before anyone played any Yahtzee.

Chapter 13: A Sticky Situation

“So, what’ll it be?” Walter McLarkle asked Robert Finkle. “Orange juice or ginger ale?”

Robert Finkle was staring at Marcie, who was staring at Robert Finkle. “Walt,” he said, “your dog is freaking me out.”

“Aww, Marcie,” Walter McLarkle cooed, picking up the dog and cradling it in his arms like a baby. “Who’s a good little doggie? Who’s a good little doggie? That’s right, you’re a good little doggie!” Walter cooed, rubbing his nose on Marcie’s.

I can deal with your fetch games. I can deal with your tummy rubs. But this...

Mid-thought, Marcie bit Walter McLarkle on the cheek. Walter screamed, and Marcie used this opportunity to race across the room and into Robert Finkle’s gloriously empty lap.

“Off! Get off!” Robert Finkle cried. Marcie ignored him. *Sure, now he wants me off now. But he doesn’t now just how much pleasure I can offer him.*

Robert Finkle tried to push the overweight dog off of his lap, but Marcie seemed to be attached by some otherworldly sticky substance. No matter how hard Robert pushed, Marcie would not budge. Robert got off of the chair and stood straight up but Marcie was stuck, at-

tached to him like a tasteless belt buckle.

“Get her off of me!” Robert Finkle cried, but Walter McLarkle was busy lumbering to this medicine cabinet to find his first aid kit, still shocked at the fact that his one and only love had...obviously in a state of terror and confusion at this obviously unwelcome visitor...attacked him. Walter wasn’t usually one to get angry at people. This was generally because he was too dumb to recognize a reason to become angry. After all Walter McLarkle was quite dumb. Dumb and hopeless and pathetic. But when it came to matters involving Marcie, Walter McLarkle knew just who his friends – and his enemies – were.

Chapter 14: Moo

Petunia Dinkle was in a state of distress. She decided to turn to her cow, Maybelline, for advice.

“Oh, Maybelline, my dear cow,” Petunia Dinkle said, stroking Maybelline’s spotted bottom.

“Moo,” Maybelline said.

“I just, my hair is just, oh Maybelline...”

“Moo,” Maybelline said.

“Moo,” Petunia Dinkle said.

“Wait, what?” Maybelline said.

“Moo,” Petunia Dinkle said.

“Let’s get those elderly bitches!” Maybelline said.

And so Petunia Dinkle climbed onto Maybelline’s back and Maybelline galloped off into the night, Petunia Dinkle wondering whether Maybelline had map-quested the elderly womens’ location, Maybelline thinking about cud.

Chapter 15 – Mortimer Pinkle Naps

Mortimer Pinkle took a much-needed nap. Just to be clear, he did not talk in his sleep.

Chapter 16 - Marjorie Sprankle Has a Cankle?

Eleanor Finkle was gesturing eagerly towards a surprised-looking turnip with a huge gaping hole for a mouth. “Marjorie Sprankle, I do believe Trudy the Turnip will be the perfect home for your dentures tonight!”

Marjorie Sprankle clutched her chest. She tried des-

perately to think of something, anything, to get out of the situation. “I...uh...I need to use the restroom,” she muttered, and rushed out of the room and into the hallway, while Eleanor Finkle shouted, “Been eating our bran flakes, have we?” Marjorie sprinted (well, sprinted as fast as you can imagine an elderly woman sprinting) to what she thought was the bathroom, but found the bathroom door to be missing. In its place was a giant carrot wearing glasses and a tuxedo. Marjorie ran to the other bathroom, but this bathroom seemed to have turned into a tossed salad with a variety of tomato types having what could only be described as an orgy while the cucumbers looked on. Extremely disturbed, Marjorie made her way to the third bathroom, which was guarded by a cauliflower that resembled a goat, and the fourth bathroom, which was blocked by a mountain of peas, all with beady red eyes. Similarly the fifth, sixth, and seventh bathrooms had all turned into, or were guarded by, vegetable/animal/mineral hybrids (one bathroom had a potato guard who strongly resembled granite). Finally, Marjorie found the eighth bathroom.

She sat on the toilet and thought about when times were simpler. When her biggest concerns were which of Cathy Mitchell’s new recipes to try out in her Xpress Redi-Set-Go ovens. When her biggest problem was her enormous cankle.

It suddenly occurred to Marjorie Sprankle that she had not even considered her cankle for hours. She nervously pulled up her pant leg and pulled down her sock, wondering what she would find.

Miraculously, she found an ankle! In fact, there was no sign of a cankle at all. Everything curved in just the right places. It was as though the cankle had never been. Marjorie Sprankle sighed in relief.

But then, a horrendous thought occurred to her. Who exactly was Marjorie Sprankle *without* her cankle? Marjorie had become so used to her cankle that the knowledge of its disappearance filled her with sadness and regret. She could barely remember her days without her cankle. Sure, the discovery of her cankle had been difficult. But as the hours went on it became easier and easier until it was effortless. And now, now she realized she was a full-fledged cankle lover. A wise man once said that you never know how much you love something until you don’t have it anymore. For Marjorie Sprankle, this wise man’s jibber-

jabber, that she once passed off as pish-pash, was finally making sense. She knew now that that wise man had once loved and lost...a cankle.

Then something occurred to Marjorie Sprinkle. Something she had always struggled with in grammar school (and college). For Marjorie Sprinkle had forgotten that her cankle happened to be on the leg on her *other* left. Marjorie, on re-examing her femurs, stood up and pumped her wrinkly little wrists into the sky. "Yes! I am Marjorie Sprinkle and I still have my cankle!"

Unfortunately for Marjorie Sprinkle, a well-loved cankle is little help when an army of angry, denture-wearing vegetables decide to attack. Especially when there are tomatoes.

Chapter 17: Pre-Revenge Recollections

As Petunia Dinkle sped to her destination on the back of her bovine companion, she considered all the moments of her life that had led to this point. She thought about her childhood, she thought about her teenagerhood, she tried to forget about her teenagerhood, and she thought about her adulthood. Was this her destiny? Was her whole life a rehearsal for this very moment?

"What am I doing?" she asked herself. "Only characters in novels have such heady, introspective flashbacks."

Instead Petunia thought about how sure-footed Maybelline was in her galloping. It was like Maybelline had some sort of intuition for where to go to find those elderly hags. *She doesn't even need MapQuest after all, she thought. How does she have such an incredible aptitude for navigation?*

Maybe she was born with it. Or maybe...

In the next Omen:
The exciting conclusion!





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